

Calhoun County Fair wraps up successful weekend

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HARDIN - What is normally a damp, empty hollow had been transformed into a thriving midway this past weekend as the Calhoun County Fair wrapped up four days of fun, agriculture, and entertainment on September 7-10.

The weekend began with an opening ceremony, where the American flag was raised accompanied by the Calhoun Entertainment Company singing the National Anthem and Fair Board President Terry Strauch welcomed all to the 2017 Calhoun County Fair.



At the same time, Dogs, Cats, Poultry, and Rabbit entries were judged in the agricultural barn. Following the ceremony, the talent show was held at the Grandstand where Mary Pluester, daughter of Clint and Chelsea Pluester of Batchtown, captured the first place prize. Mary will now perform in Springfield at the state competition next year.



The excitement continued on Friday when the Illinois Farm Pullers Truck Pull was held at the grounds. While the trucks were vying for the title, Neveah Grissom was winning hers at the Jr. Miss Calhoun pageant at the Grandstand. Neveah is the daughter of Lori Jansen and Richie Grissom of Hardin. Following the pageant, Emily Johnson performed on the grounds.

Saturday was the busiest day of the weekend with seven different events taking place throughout the day. Beginning at 8 a.m., the day kicked off with the judging of the Junior Fair and 4-H exhibits in the exhibition shed. Ribbons were awarded for various types of art and craft entries. At 9 a.m., the junior and open horse shows took place at the arena. 12 p.m. brought the Junior Olympics and Pedal Pull at the arena, where children of all ages were able to compete for prizes and glory.



Calhoun Country Vintage performed on the grounds from 2 to 4 p.m.. 5 p.m. began the Little Miss and Little Mister Calhoun pageants. Peyton Baalman, daughter of Colleen and Wayne Baalman of Meppen was crowned along with Owen Mager, son of Sarah Roades and John Mager of Batchtown. The IPTA Tractor Pull brought big crowds at 7 p. m., followed by a performance by the band Hurricane Creek.

The beautiful weekend wrapped up in style with the Calhoun County Fair Parade starting Sunday at noon. [Details on the parade can be found here.](#) The Crypt Kickers provided entertainment on the grounds post-parade and concluded at 2 p.m. when the demolition derby began at the pit at the north end of the grounds.

A half hour prior to the start of the derby, Roach Power Wheels Derby Team held a power wheels derby for children ages 5 – 8. Children were able to sign up free of charge, thanks to the Calhoun County Fair Board, don bicycle helmets, and crash battery-operated power wheel vehicles into each other for 10 minutes. A second power wheels derby “heat” was held between the compact and stock classes. Roach Power Wheels Derby is owned by Brad and Joan Roach of Fieldon, check out their [Facebook page](#) for more information.



Two heats were held at the derby this year; compact and stock. After a long-fought battle in the compact class, Scott Meinhardt of New Baden, Illinois took the nearly six-foot tall trophy and \$1,000 prize. He was followed by Jerry Kunz of Trenton in second place and Andy White of Virginia, Illinois in third. They received \$500 and \$250 prizes, respectively.



The stock class brought even louder vehicles and more spectacular crashes. Eventually, Scott McAdams of Palmyra, Illinois captured the first place prize of \$1,000 and a free lawn-mowing from Waylon's Lawn Care. Close behind him was Cody Meyer of Jerseyville and Rodney Gress of Hardin, who received \$500 and \$250 prizes, respectively.



This year's derby was promoted by Track Shot Promotions, who conducted four derbies this year including Carrollton, Jersey County, Calhoun, and Macoupin. Promoters were Nick, Jana, and Brian Rimby, Chris and Stephanie Edwards, Justin and Daniel Houseman, Ben Prough, Chris Schulze (head official of the Calhoun Derby), and Tommy and Ally Schaaake.

Following the derby, the Jerseyville High School Jazz Band and Show Choir performed at the Grandstand as a prelude to the Miss Calhoun County pageant. The Jazz Ensemble and Band performed a variety of smooth jazz classics along with jazzed-up versions of recognizable pieces. The show choir had an “80s Dance Party” and performed a range of popular 80s music and dance moves, including Michael Jackson's “Thriller” and Kenny Loggins' “Footloose.”



Once the JCHS students exited the stage with a standing ovation, the Pageant began. Emceed by the ever-entertaining Richard Ringhausen, the first contestant, Kimberly Nicole Dalia De LaCruz, was soon followed by Katherine Elizabeth Simon, Kassidy Leigh Klocke, Melissa Kay Clark, and Sophia Catherine Klunk. All five young women gave compelling speeches and were true definitions of elegance and grace. Between business, swimsuit, and formal attire rounds, entertainment was provided by the four-man A Capella group “Blend.”



Returning to the Calhoun County Fair for their second non-consecutive year, “Blend” captivated the audience with their amazing harmonies and impressive bass singer. After their third set on stage the group was met by an overwhelming roar of applause and a standing ovation. The group announces their retirement after next year, to which emcee Richard Ringhouse replied “Who wants the group to come out of retirement and return next year?” The crowd response was deafening and positive.

After much anticipation, the judges returned their results. Retiring Miss Calhoun 2016, Cassidy Becker took her final walk of the stage, escorted by her younger sister Addison, while listening to an emotional recording of her thank-you's and favorite moments of the year. While sitting next to newly-crowned Jr. Miss Calhoun, Nevaeh Grissom, she could be seen wiping away tears. Jr. Miss Calhoun, Neveah, promptly leaned over and gave her a heart-warming hug.



The first prize announced was Miss Congeniality, which is voted by the the contestants. Sophia Klunk was the recipient of the prestigious award. Next was Second Runner Up which went to Katherine Simon. The First Runner Up was Sophia Klunk. Kassidy Klocke was crowned Miss Calhoun County 2017, joining a long-standing tradition in the small community. Kassidy will continue on to the State Competition next year. Congratulations and good luck, Kassidy.



The end of the Miss Calhoun pageant signals the end of the Calhoun County Fair, as most food stands have packed up their wares and are headed home. The fair appears to have been a great success this year. As always, the Fair Board has done a fantastic job organizing this year's fair and wouldn't be possible without them.